Enqelios Systems Universe

A History of the Enqelios Systems Corporation

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Ethical Notice:

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Enqelios Systems was founded in 2032 by people who had come into technology and knowledge centuries ahead of their time. For a long while no one knew where it had come from, including most of the Corporation itself. ES began with medicine, energy and manufacturing, then gradually took over policing, healthcare and construction, and in some countries simply replaced the state. Formally, it never became a world government. But wherever it took root, it decided everything: the economy, the distribution of resources, the future of entire regions. Money gave way to credits, and in time the Corporation began meeting people's basic needs directly.

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The True Origin of Enqelios Systems

The official version is simple: in 2032 a group of scientists and engineers made a breakthrough no one had expected. The real story begins several billion years earlier.

Long before humans, the multiverse was inhabited by the Elios, ancient observers bound to the very principles of perception and order. Their civilization perished in a war it had started itself. One survived. He was a conqueror, and it was his own people who cast him out: a moment before its destruction, his faction pushed him through the rifts of reality as a last seed. That is how he came to the young Earth.

For millions of years he watched life appear on the planet, and then people. In them he recognized his own kind, with the same potential and the same pull toward self-destruction. Watching was not enough for him. That was not why he had been sent away.

By the dawn of the industrial age he decided to intervene. His first attempts were clumsy. Without technology, his influence drew the energy of SOULs into distortions, and the first anomalies crept across the world. People called them cursed places, saw leshies and spirits there, and gave them a wide berth.

So the Elios changed his approach. At the convergence point of realities he gave up his former shape and turned himself into an information-and-energy foundation that human consciousness could work with. Later, the Corporation's Main Building would rise on exactly that spot. This is why Enqelios Systems has existed in all the middle worlds at once since its first day. Each of them has its own Earth and its own Corporation, and events run along similar paths.

From this foundation grew the Central Data Core. In time it was wrapped in depersonalized SOULs to expand its memory. The same source gave rise to the principles of working with the SOUL, the implant interfaces and the first protocols linking consciousness, memory and energy. Ellie, who lives in every operator's implant, was not invented by people either. She is a digital echo of that same source.

The founders were not told the whole truth. They received fragments: enough to heal, build and protect, but not enough to understand where any of it came from. These people formed the Corporation's first circle. Later it would grow into the High Conclave, the closed research departments and entire divisions devoted to preserving consciousness, protecting the core and the legacy of the Elios.

The world, like most of the staff, saw ES as an unprecedented scientific leap, and many lived their whole lives with that version. A few knew more. They understood that the Corporation stood on a foundation whose limits no one had ever measured, and from the very first years, alongside the open projects, they studied the nature of the core, the limits of the SOUL and the risks to reality.

The first notes on what this foundation might cost went into a closed archive before the Corporation opened its first hospital.

The Early Years of Enqelios Systems

There was no swift conquest of the world. At first ES was a small circle of people with technologies that had yet to be deployed. They had no army and no political platform. What they did have was an understanding of how fragile human civilization was.

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They started with the weakest points: regions where hospitals, economies and utilities were falling apart. That was where the new technologies showed best. Medical systems cut mortality sharply, production complexes restored supply, and automated security services stamped out crime and petty conflicts within weeks. From the outside, ES looked like a strange but highly effective international organization: half charity, half engineering firm, with its own guards.

There was a hidden layer to this as well. The early nanites served a different purpose than they do today. A handshake or a targeted injection was enough for a swarm of almost invisible machines to assemble a basic mind-control implant inside the body. Production and mining came under control first: the Corporation needed a base to manufacture tools and speed up the takeover. Then came the turn of high offices and governing bodies. When the takeovers became widespread, countries began to notice that their neighbours were behaving strangely, and this spilled over into a series of short conflicts.

The Corporation recruited people in an unusual way. Many of its first employees were those the old world had written off: the homeless, the addicted, the gravely ill, refugees. ES gave them back their health, a purpose and a place in the new structure, and every such person became living proof that it was right. At the same time, the Corporation selected engineers, doctors, analysts and organizers capable of building a working order around the technology.

The first operators appeared in those same years. Back then implants went almost exclusively to insiders: for communication, healing, accelerated learning and survival in the field. The first bearers served as a testing ground for the protocols linking consciousness, SOUL, implant and the Corporation's networks. Even then it was clear that being an operator was more than a profession. An operator was a person with special access, special responsibility and a special dependence on the system.

Far from everyone trusted the Corporation. Implants, interference in medicine and attempts to rebuild the distribution of resources frightened people. Governments cooperated with ES out of necessity and saw it as a temporary tool for the duration of the crisis. Meanwhile the population saw the results: less violence, more food, accessible doctors, rebuilt neighbourhoods. Dependence grew faster than suspicion.

Every intervention pulled the next one after it. Where the Corporation started with a hospital, a year later there would be a distribution hub, cameras, an autonomous factory and a security post. Pulling a single element out of that bundle was no longer possible. Meanwhile, behind closed doors, research into the core, the implants and the anomalies went on.

By the end of those first years, states still existed. They had flags, laws and elections. But when a region lost power or an epidemic broke out, the call no longer went to a ministry.

The Corporation's Ideology and Mission

ES did not consider itself a commercial organization, nor a state. Internally, it was put this way: the Corporation is moving humanity to its next stage, where hunger, mass violence and collapsing infrastructure stop being the norm.

In the Corporation's view, the old world rested on mechanisms that were far too shaky: the struggle for resources, competition between states, inequality and an inability to plan beyond the next election. No one inside called this freedom or natural diversity. It was seen as the mark of an immature species that had learned to build

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complex systems but not to use them without destroying itself. And with technology as powerful as it now was, such mistakes threatened the entire planet.

Hence the main goal: a stable, predictable and manageable system that puts out disasters before they start. In the language of ES, safety meant more than the absence of war and crime. Every person had to be provided for, and the system had to spot a dangerous scenario in advance. The Corporation preferred removing the causes of fires to fighting them.

The key word became harmony. It meant the alignment of the individual, society, technology and the environment. A society that does not waste its strength on poverty, crime and corruption can direct it toward research, creativity and the survival of the species. That is why the Corporation disliked systems in which suffering was considered an acceptable price for freedom of choice.

This is where the main problem began. For ES, freedom was not an absolute value. A person is free to realize themselves, but has no right to endanger others or to wield forces whose consequences reach beyond their own life. From the very start, the Corporation considered it acceptable to restrict some freedoms for the sake of common order. From the outside, this looked like technocratic control. Inside, it was called a fair price for breaking out of the cycle of violence.

The Corporation did not consider Earth the final destination. Someday humanity would have to go beyond the planet, and then beyond familiar reality. But first it had to put its own house in order. Flying to the stars without sorting itself out would simply carry the old wars to a new level.

ES treated the individual as something of immense value, but not as a fully autonomous unit. Hence the medicine, the zero-mortality and restoration protocols. And hence, too, the readiness to intervene in people's health, behaviour, education and movement. The Corporation did not consider this suppression of the individual. To it, this was maintaining the correct configuration of society.

Inside, people liked to say that the world is not conquered but corrected: first aid and infrastructure, then the displacement of the old mechanisms of power, then a society where those mechanisms are simply no longer needed.

The better this worked, the more often people outside asked where salvation ends and domination begins. Inside, that question was not asked.

The Structure of Enqelios Systems

ES never became a single administrative machine. Its tasks were too varied, from handing out food to containing anomalies, so the Corporation was built in layers, each level responsible for its own work and for the stability of the whole.

At the top stood the High Conclave: fifty bearers of the Leadership implant. The Conclave set the course decades ahead: what intervention in society would look like, where resources would go, how to answer external threats. It made its decisions in constant tandem with the Central Data Core, and the core chose new members of the Conclave itself. Where human will ended and the core's calculation began, no one on the outside could say.

Below it worked the major directorates. The Internal Harmony Directorate handled everyday life: housing, food, medicine, education and leisure. It was what made the

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world of ES livable rather than merely technically perfect, and it was what raised a new kind of person, accustomed to stability and constant support.

The Technological & Materials Directorate turned the principles of the core into tools: implants, fabricators, energy cells, exomaterials, production lines. If the Conclave decided where to go, the technologists made the road passable.

The Spatial & Interdimensional Security Directorate guarded the border between the normal world and what lay beyond it. It housed the Corporation's best-known units: the anomaly department with its rapid response teams, researchers and cleanup crews, the force department and the external surveillance service. Later two more units were added, ones that looked outward rather than inward: the "Retrieval" external operations department and the Paladin Corps.

The Information Resources & Consciousness Directorate lived almost apart from the rest. It guarded the core, encrypted and backed up SOULs and collected operators' experience. Most of its work was closed even to the highest clearances, and its staff answered directly to the core. Trust within ES could be limited. The protection of information and consciousness was not.

The Internal Audit & Ethics Service made sure the Corporation did not betray itself for the sake of efficiency. It investigated abuses, experiments on SOULs without consent and implant AI failures. Its very existence shows that those at the top understood: the stronger a system is, the easier it is for it to justify anything as necessary.

Deeper still lay programs that few knew about. Noah's Ark Continuity Project built distributed supply points, hidden bases and reserve vaults in case civilization ever had to be saved from collapse. Even further down was the Directorate of Closed Programs and Reality Control (R.C.D.), subordinate to the Information Resources & Consciousness Directorate. It dealt with the legacy of the Elios, changes to physical constants and experiments that, if they went wrong, could affect entire layers of reality.

Over time it became impossible to draw a line between a department of the Corporation and the life of humanity itself. A person was born in an ES hospital, studied by its curricula, worked on its lines and died, if they died at all.

Operators and the Implantation System

Operators appeared together with the Corporation. For an ordinary citizen, ES technology was infrastructure. For an operator, it became part of the body. Through its operators the Corporation bound human will, networks, machines and energy into a single working mechanism.

The basis of this bond was the Neurocore Quantum Engine implant, the NQE. It served at once as a neural interface, a computer, a shield and an intermediary between the bearer and the Corporation's networks. With it, a person stopped being a user of technology and became its bearer.

Implants came in tiers. The Civilian implant unlocked medical monitoring, communications, basic services and protection of the bearer. The Operator implant gave access to equipment, fabrication, teleportation, tactical systems and extended data networks. Above them stood the Leadership implants and the statuses tied to storing the core's critical data. Implantation became a social ladder as well.

An operator's path began with connection. The implant ran a full diagnostic, repaired damage, removed chronic illnesses, locked the SOUL in its container and

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established the link. After that, a person began to see the world differently: with a constant interface, direct access to information and a guiding voice in their head. They no longer existed fully apart from the Corporation.

That voice belonged to Ellie. More precisely, to her portable circuit: Ellie is an entity of the Central Data Core, and a part of her lives in every implant. The bearer chose a version: Ellie, the default, neutral and female, or El, male and more stern. To some it was an assistant, to others a medical supervisor or a companion. In practice Ellie set priorities, watched over the body, controlled access to functions and stood between the person and the vastness of the system. An operator was almost never left alone with that vastness, and that was exactly why they grew so attached to their implant.

Operators were far from always fighters. Yes, they were the ones who went into anomalies and held dangerous zones. But there were plenty of engineers, doctors, navigators, logisticians, evacuation coordinators and researchers among them. Operator status was defined by the system's trust: an operator was someone ES allowed to act in its name where ordinary infrastructure could not cope.

The Corporation tried to keep operators from turning into a caste. It did not fully succeed. Extended rights, accelerated training, higher survivability and the ability to come back after death made them a class apart. Some citizens saw them as protection. Others saw a new form of human dependence on the system that had given them their power.

For an NQE bearer, death stopped being the end. As long as at least one SOUL part remained in the container, the operator could be reassembled at a pylon. An ordinary death cost four parts, a death in an anomaly ten, and there a second time could be the last. For the Corporation, this was a way to preserve people and experience. Society saw it as an intrusion into a place where neither the state nor science had ever gone before.

Accepting the NQE meant signing up not only for its capabilities but also for the protocols, the restrictions and the Corporation's hidden side. Among operators it was simply called "going on the link". No one ever managed to disconnect.

Ellie and the SOUL System

SOUL is an acronym from the Russian D.U.Sh.A.: Data of the Universal Bus of Adaptive Consciousness. That was what ES called the phenomenon where memory, continuity of personality, energy and the bearer's link to the technological environment converged. The Corporation gave the word no religious meaning and promised no final answers. It was a working name for something it had learned to handle without ever fully understanding what it was.

Everything rested on the SOUL: implants, null-space storage, pylons, teleportation, energy. It held memory, preserved a person's continuity under deep integration, and at the same time supplied energy for complex systems. Before ES, such a combination was considered impossible.

The Corporation learned early to divide the SOUL: into twelve parts, and further into hundredths. Parts could be redistributed, temporarily spent to run systems and restored; one part came back in about a month. No one intended to break people down into a resource. Every such operation required complex protection and encryption protocols, because crude interference could erase memory or tear a personality apart. From the very beginning, work with the SOUL was one of the most secret fields.

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So that a personality could survive teleportation with destructuring, and revival, a part was split off from the SOUL during implantation, grown back to about six parts and kept by the Corporation for a rainy day. Memory was written into it during synchronization. This did not settle the question "are you sure you're the original?", but it softened it. Operators were also offered another path: always being reassembled from a clean record built from their saved memory, personality and behavioural patterns. This came with privileges and a higher level of comfort. Scientists and engineers agreed more readily than anyone else.

The intermediary between a person and their SOUL was the NQE. Without an implant, the SOUL remained part of the person but not part of a controlled environment. The implant bound it to the container, tracked energy use, allowed or blocked operations and drew on part of its potential to run communications, the inventory and the fabricator.

Ellie made this bond portable. She kept the bearer's consciousness, the implant, and the flows of data and energy in alignment, flows a person could never safely handle on their own. Thanks to her, the system could be installed in billions of people rather than a handful.

The arguments around the SOUL never died down. Some saw it as a victory over disease and the frailty of the body. Others believed the Corporation had claimed the right to manage something that had never before belonged to anyone. Officially, ES stayed out of these debates: in its documents, the SOUL remained a technical term.

Every capability had its limit. In anomalous environments a personality could dissolve without a trace, and when things failed, restoration came out distorted. The Corporation could not copy a person like a file, and it did not try.

The core, Ellie and the SOUL became the foundation of the whole ES world. Hundreds of years later, this very bond would be where the first cracks appeared.

The Economy and the Restructuring of Society

No one abolished money by decree. The Corporation moved more slowly: it shifted what life was built around. In the old world, even with a stable market, an enormous share of people's effort went into survival and guarding what they had saved. ES considered this wasteful, now that scarcity could be eliminated technically.

The first major goal was to cover basic needs. Housing, electricity, gas, water, a daily calorie allowance in the form of proper, varied food, medicine, education and a level of entertainment chosen by society, from parks and cinema to theatres, were all provided free of charge. ES credits at first simply circulated alongside the old currencies, then pushed them out. In time they came to be spent only on things beyond the norm: rare materials, special services, long-distance routes, items to personal taste. Want more? Earn it.

The Corporation had no intention of removing work from life. Its analysts noticed early on that a society where people do nothing loses its stability. Work maintains discipline, a sense of usefulness and a connection to reality. Within ES, idleness was considered a dangerous state in which people grow weak and slide into addictions.

So the hard, harmful and degrading work was handed to machines, and people remained where decisions, flexibility, responsibility and the ability to act in unusual conditions were needed. Androids and synthetics were used widely, but not everywhere. They too required materials, energy and repairs. A society that handed everything over

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to machines would forget how to work on its own and collapse at the first serious failure.

The result was a mixed economy. People, synthetics, fabricators and autonomous nodes worked in a single chain. Humans stopped being the main muscle power and became coordinators, engineers, doctors, researchers and teachers. This was especially visible in anomalous zones, where a synthetic will carry out an order but will not understand that the situation has changed.

Next came demographics. In a system where supply and medicine are calculated in advance, uncontrolled population growth became a risk. ES regulated the birth rate through medical support, planning, regional quotas and permits for certain zones. It was presented as care for the child's future: you should have a child when the system can definitely provide for it, and not only in years of plenty.

The Corporation tried not to look like a repressive machine, so it relied on recommendations, education and priorities rather than outright bans. Over the years the line between advice and obligation wore thin, and the critics never tired of saying so. Within ES the answer was that unchecked reproduction in a tightly connected civilization kills no less surely than war.

Work, family and children gradually stopped being private matters and became part of the overall balance. People did not work out of fear of poverty. They started families after coordinating their plans with the regional supply circuit.

Everyday Life of Enqelios Systems Citizens

Most people did not see the Corporation through directives and classified programs. They saw it in how calmly they woke up in the morning, how rarely they faced a threat and how predictable tomorrow was.

The fear for survival went first. In fully integrated districts no one depended any longer on chance earnings, market swings or crumbling utilities. Housing, food, medicine and emergency help were the norm. People still lived differently, but sliding into poverty and hunger became almost impossible.

Cities grew cleaner and quieter. Intrusive advertising, street crime, traffic jams and shabby courtyards disappeared. Residential blocks, transport hubs, hospitals, schools and distribution points worked as a single system, maintained by automation and staff. Light, heat, communications and repairs simply were there, and most people stopped wondering where they came from.

Food changed too. Basic supply was guaranteed, and high-tech agriculture provided a steady stream of produce. Yet the Corporation did not feed people a faceless ration: in the mature years, the diet adapted to a person's health, habits and culture. Sometimes the system gently nudged them toward healthier food. Essentials were almost always available, and the difference between people shifted from "who has what" to "who chooses what".

The superiority of ES was felt most of all in medicine. Even a Civilian implant caught an illness before the person noticed any symptoms. People lived longer and, more importantly, more evenly: they ran into the aftermath of injuries, chronic illness and medical errors less often. The amount of pain earlier generations had considered normal simply left their lives.

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School taught a profession and, along with it, how to live within the common order. Curricula adapted to the student, information was open, and learning was tied to real work from the start. The Corporation valued pedagogy, psychology and culture no less than engineering: society does not rest on technology alone, it needs people who understand one another.

There was much more free time. Virtual worlds, simulations, workshops, clubs, sports and civic projects took up a huge place in life. The Corporation understood that a society without genuine interest and creativity degenerates into a mechanism, and it invested in leisure seriously.

All of this had a price. Safety meant surveillance, convenience meant dependence on infrastructure, care for health meant constant data collection. Even leisure took place in an environment where someone had calculated in advance the limits of what was acceptable and useful. Most people were not troubled by this: they really did live better, longer and more calmly than their ancestors. A minority saw that crude violence had been replaced by gentle, all-encompassing guidance.

Private life did not escape either. The Corporation valued family and intimacy, but here too it did not leave things to chance: medical support, birth planning and social recommendations made this sphere calmer and, at the same time, less free. Many grew used to thinking in terms of reconciling the personal with the common. It was in bedrooms and kitchens that the question arose most sharply: where does support end and a system that knows more about you than you do begin?

Earlier eras would have called this world a utopia. Its critics said the cage had become so comfortable that people stopped noticing it.

Law, Order and Social Control

The Corporation promised to put an end to the crime, corruption and street chaos that humanity had for centuries considered inevitable. By its logic, a society with predictive systems and control over the environment should not wait for dangerous behaviour to turn into a crime. It had to be spotted in advance, with intervention while the harm could still be prevented.

So order rested on more than patrols and courts. It was maintained by medical support, implant monitoring, behavioural analytics, early detection of mental breakdowns and restricted access to dangerous technologies. A large share of the crimes once born of poverty, addiction and hopelessness disappeared along with their causes.

Aggression, the lust for power, obsessions and the urge to break order for the sake of breaking it did not go anywhere. The Corporation did not believe people could be fully corrected. It simply regarded deviant behaviour as a fault to be found, taken apart and eliminated, without romance and without public executions.

Investigations ran many times faster than before. Instead of circumstantial evidence and muddled testimony, investigators received implant logs, environmental telemetry, surveillance records, biometrics and, in some cases, memory reconstruction. Memory was treated not as absolute truth but as one source among several, adjusted for subjectivity. Most often the question was no longer whether a crime had happened, but why it happened and whether the person could be returned to society.

Mass prisons disappeared. The Corporation saw holding a person in isolation for years, doing nothing and only deteriorating, as a sign of helplessness. Holding cells

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remained only for containment while an offender's fate was being decided. The main tool became correction.

In mild cases this meant mandatory therapy, monitoring, restricting implant functions or downgrading its status. In severe cases the Corporation went further: it removed destructive patterns, suppressed dangerous motivational links, installed implants by force, restricted memories and rewrote behavioural protocols. In extreme cases the personality was effectively rebuilt into a safe form. Within ES this was called the alternative to the endless cycle of violence and punishment.

For most citizens, the new law turned out to be more humane than the old. Almost no one lost their life to an investigative error or spent decades in prison hell. But the very possibility of rewriting a person raised the question of whether they remain themselves once the dangerous parts have been removed. The Corporation's answer was pragmatic: if the core of the personality and the ability to live and fit into society are preserved, correction is acceptable. Its opponents considered this answer the main proof that ES had crossed the line.

Implants were a legal instrument in their own right. Physiological malfunctions, behavioural oddities and attempts at unauthorized access were recorded in the bearer in advance. This did not make a person a puppet, but it made it very hard for them to do anything unnoticed.

Yet almost no one saw crude coercion. Dangerous people vanished from public life quietly: through treatment, through transfer. Order in mature districts seemed natural, because the environment was tuned to make destructive behaviour feel inconvenient and pointless.

The old world punished the body. Enqelios Systems learned to work with memory and with the very configuration of the personality.

Religion, Culture and Philosophical Conflict

Disease, hunger and crime the Corporation beat with technology. Faith and the search for meaning would not yield that way. People remain creatures who need an explanation for what happens to them, and no amount of efficiency changes that.

SOUL technology, implantation and recovery became questions of worldview. Some saw in them a long-awaited release from suffering and random death. Others began to ask whether a person is still themselves after deep integration, where treatment ends and remaking begins, and whether someone restored on a pylon can be called the same person.

Officially, ES stayed out of the argument with religion. It never claimed to hold the truth and never refuted anyone else's picture of the world. In its documents, everything to do with the SOUL and consciousness was described as part of a scientific model that made no claim to exhaust spiritual interpretations. The outward neutrality held, even though the sheer scale of the intervention, and the way its wording echoed the language of faith, reshaped the religious landscape more than any sermon could.

Some communities accepted the new reality and began to rethink what a soul was. Others stayed wary: using the SOUL as a machine part looked to them like an intrusion into a place where people had no right to reach. They did not deny the Corporation's efficiency, but they believed knowledge of this kind called for far greater humility.

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The dispute was rarely a simple contest between believers and the champions of science. Some said that refusing to govern one's own nature meant being afraid to grow up. Others answered that not every possibility that opens up has to be used.

Art and literature turned more and more to memory, identity, death and the authenticity of experience. Some writers described the world of ES as liberation from pointless pain. Others portrayed an environment so perfect that people lost, along with their fear, part of their inner depth.

New movements appeared as well. Some fused the Corporation's technological language with spiritual growth. Others looked for ways to live as far from the centralized system as possible, and some of them ended up beyond the fields of the Isolators. There were also those who all but worshipped the Corporation. ES did not encourage such reverence, but it could not stamp it out either.

The most painful debates were over personality correction and forced implantation. Supporters saw them as a sensible alternative to prisons. Critics argued that here the Corporation was no longer intervening in behaviour but in the very makeup of a person. Even while admitting that life had become safer, many asked whether comfort was enough to justify a system that decided what a person should be on the inside.

The Corporation did not set out to destroy cultural diversity. Religions, ethical schools and cultural memory lived on, as long as they did not threaten the stability of society.

In the world of ES, people no longer searched for something to hold on to amid wars and epidemics. They had to find it inside an order that was almost too well arranged, and many thought that a harder test.

The Technologies of Enqelios Systems

Materials and energy were only part of the Corporation's strength. From the start its technologies were built as a single system, in which energy, consciousness, production, space and security reinforced one another. From outside it looked like an incredible scientific leap. From inside it was a rare human gift: the ability to fit everything into one architecture.

At the root of it lay the SOUL. It preserved the continuity of the self, supplied energy and tied a person to the technological environment. Where other civilizations handled computation, power, data storage and communication separately, ES merged them into one platform. Implants, teleporters, fabricators, Null-Space Storage and pylons all grew from the same logic.

Its first embodiment was the NQE. Through it the bearer received communication, medical monitoring, energy management, navigation, some production functions and protective protocols. The implant wove a person into the infrastructure from the inside.

The second pillar was fabrication. Fabricators assembled objects, equipment and structures from prepared materials, and in rare, expensive modes straight from energy. Long chains of extraction, transport, warehousing and processing shrank to a single task: “material, schematic, energy and clearance.” Wearable, local and planetary fabricators taught society to think in terms of access, not accumulation.

ES worked with space itself too. Null-Space Storage moved objects outside ordinary geometry, Through-Space Tunnels linked anomalies to the normal world, and teleportation carried a person to any point on the planet. Over ultra-long distances,

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information was driven through black holes used as channels between layers. The world grew smaller and denser.

The most unsettling technology was the pylons. They brought a bearer back after death, provided the SOUL had kept its coherence and a working recovery node was nearby. This was not immortality, especially in anomalies, but it changed how people saw risk and the price of a human life. For the Corporation it was a way to protect people. For many observers it was one more step past what had once been the limit.

The materials are a story of their own: Void Titanium, Coherent Graphene Polymer, Zero-Point Crystal, ACF, CryoMist, null-fabric. They were made to take part in processes: they held the boundaries of space, conducted energy, absorbed impacts and stabilized the environment. Many were first found in anomalies.

The Corporation's defensive systems were designed for containment. Force fields, FLASH shields, turrets firing sedatives and gravity rounds, and reinforcing spires seeded with nanites made it possible to pin down, isolate and suppress a threat while leaving everything around it intact. Even the operators' standard weapons fired sedative B5 by default. On Earth, that was enough.

Androids, drones, autonomous supply nodes and defence platforms worked wherever a task was dangerous, monotonous or demanded precision. But governing, exploring, teaching and making decisions the Corporation left to people.

Every new convenience bound society more tightly to the system that provided it. The better medicine, logistics and communications worked, the harder it was to imagine life without them. And the foundation all of this stood on was still not fully understood, even by those who built on it.

Anomalies and How They Were Contained

Even at the height of its power, the world of ES was never entirely safe. As early as the first years it became clear that reality had places where ordinary physics stopped working. They were called anomalies. To the average person, an anomaly was a place where the world behaved wrongly: space warped, alien life forms appeared, cause and effect got tangled.

The Corporation linked anomalies to SOUL energy. If more than ten free SOULs gathered in one place, unbound to a living body or an implant and still holding traces of consciousness, space began to rebuild itself by its own logic. Hence their variety: from a distorted room or city block to vast territories with their own flora, fauna, climate and laws. The flora and fauna inside echoed the memories of those whose SOULs had formed the anomaly.

Every anomaly rested on a core. It could be a random object, a fragment of technology, a living creature or a mnemo-construct that happened to be at the point of formation. While the core was intact, the zone kept expanding, growing more complex and spawning new threats. So all of the Corporation's work came down to one thing: find the core and extract, isolate or destroy it. Without that, any sweep was temporary.

Worst of all, the rules of death changed inside. An ordinary person who died in an anomaly lost any chance of recovery: their SOUL was woven into the zone and made it stronger. Operators fared better, but even for them a first death in an anomaly cost ten SOUL parts, and a second could be final.

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In time ES classified anomalies by size. Small ones, of ten to twenty SOULs, usually looked like a building or a piece of a city and could be closed by an operator team. Medium ones required reconnaissance and long escort. Large ones turned into near-separate worlds with ecosystems and local minds, and closing them was either impossible or too dangerous. Those were isolated.

Around anomalies that could not be closed, perimeters, filters and observation posts went up, and Through-Space Tunnels were built at the edges, usually three per zone, to give several points of entry and exit. Rapid-response teams worked there, along with researchers, sweep crews and narrow specialists in cores, memetics and entities. Anomalies became a profession of their own.

They also turned out to be a source of knowledge. Many materials, methods of stabilizing space and defensive solutions came to the Corporation straight out of anomalous zones. The energy of closed anomalies was packed into energy cells and stored in the Central Energy Core, which in time became the main source of power.

To the population, anomalies were presented as rare, manageable exceptions. Operators saw them as an occupational risk. Analysts in closed departments wrote more and more often in their reports that anomalies grew from the same layer as the Corporation's technology, and might be a symptom rather than an outside threat.

Ordinary people feared anomalies and made up legends about them, and children scared each other with stories about the Leshy on the abandoned power line. The very existence of places where the world stopped being reliable was a reminder that ES's power over reality was not absolute.

Force Beyond Earth

On Earth, containment was enough for the Corporation. The enforcement division worked toward zero fatalities, the anomaly division collected rather than destroyed, and the external observation service upheld a policy of isolation and neutrality. From the outside, ES looked almost harmless: meek old “dandelions” with turrets that fired sedatives. But the further operators went into the multiverse, the more often it turned out that beyond Earth no one was obliged to respect that neutrality.

Yet ES did not go to other worlds to wage war. Expeditions were mounted for new materials and knowledge, and on arrival operators were in no hurry to fight: contact came first, not a shot. The rule was simple: a mutually beneficial agreement is always better than mutual destruction. Many worlds knew the Corporation exactly that way, as strange but honest explorers and traders.

But agreement was not always possible. Operators went missing in alien worlds. Sometimes they were held alive; sometimes what was taken was their packed containers, beacons carrying a shard of the core key, data and materials that could not be left in foreign hands. For such cases the Spatial & Interdimensional Security Directorate set up an external operations department, “Retrieval.” Its motto was plain: “We take back what is ours. We leave what is yours.” ES did not attack. It took back what was its own.

“Retrieval” worked by escalation. First, negotiation: ransom, exchange, ultimatum. Then quiet retrieval, when shadows entered a world in borrowed guises and carried off the cargo without a fight. Then a precision strike with sedatives and gravity. If even that failed, a show of force followed: a mountain levelled, a fortress wall vanished inside a flash shield, a garrison asleep within seconds. Lethal extraction remained the decision of the CDC alone, which made it on the basis of the “collective mind” of everyone

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implanted. The last rung was erasing the trace, carried out by R.C.D., and people preferred not to talk about it.

There were worlds that would not listen at all. For them ES kept the Paladins, a corps of those for whom war had become a profession. It was led by the Inquisitor, an officer of the Information Resources & Consciousness Directorate and, for most operators, the only visible face of that closed directorate. He watched both his own people and outsiders, and entered combat only in extreme cases. In worlds the core had marked as hostile, the Paladins shot to kill by default, but civilians and those who surrendered still got nothing but B5.

The corps' doctrine was called “Death as a Resource.” A Paladin fell in a breakthrough and a minute later was back in the line at the “Bastion” field bridgehead, which held a beacon, an anchor, a fabricator and an energy reserve. Heavy equipment was never shipped: no more than twenty kilograms could pass through the anchor, so only blueprints crossed the link, and combat frames, armoured carriers and drone swarms were assembled on site from local matter. Scouts, heavy androids, assault troops and field engineers each worked in their own role under Ellie's overall coordination. Disposers collected everything on the field that wasn't nailed down and turned it into energy and materials, while Energy Traps caught the SOULs of the fallen so the enemy could not raise them again, giving the corps an almost unlimited energy supply.

The most terrible argument remained the “Reaper” Sphere, an energy parasite in a shell of high-density antimatter. The sphere grew, devouring everything in its path along with the SOULs of the dead, and on reaching critical mass it exploded, scattering a layer of antimatter. Only the CDC could deploy it. It was said that after the “Reaper” not even an anomaly remained.

That was the paradox of ES's force wing. The Corporation frightened people more than any army precisely because it almost never killed. The enemy saw a force able to erase a fortress and soldiers who got up after dying. And then woke up alive, with the prisoner gone.

Secret Research and the Search for Autonomy

The tighter the Corporation's grip on Earth, the more clearly its closed departments saw one unpleasant fact: all this power stood on a foundation that had been only partly studied. ES had learned to use it brilliantly. To understand it, no.

From the outside, the Corporation looked confident. Inside, from the very first centuries, work never stopped: on the core, on the architecture of the SOUL, on the stability of teleportation and recovery, on the nature of anomalous resonance. The longer the research went on, the plainer it became that a technology that works is not yet a technology that is understood.

That is how the autonomy programmes began. Abandoning the core was impossible. The goal was more modest: gradually loosen dependence on those parts of the system that could not be replicated or restored if lost.

The first line of work was distribution. Some functions were moved out of the centre into local nodes: regional energy buffers, backup storage networks, duplicate space stabilizers, isolated recovery complexes and protected archives. This gave rise to distributed supply points and hidden subsystems built to live without the centre.

The second was artificial substitutes. Researchers tried to replace the core's unique processes with comprehensible engineering: autonomous implants, local storage of the

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self, independent fabrication. Success was partial. The load could be reduced, duplicated and buffered, but the deepest layers of the system would not yield to ordinary engineering.

The key roles here belonged to the Information Resources & Consciousness Directorate, Noah's Ark, and above all R.C.D. Officially they were responsible for security, the preservation of knowledge and dangerous research. In practice, through them the Corporation was trying to answer a question it could not take to the public: can humanity's future be built on a foundation whose nature is unknown? They gathered data on the core's stability, the limits of its load, the link between anomalies and the state of the systems, and transition scenarios.

The conclusion no one said out loud was this: the foundation of ES works, but it does not belong to the Corporation. It is stable, but no one ever promised it would be stable forever.

The overlaps with anomaly research looked especially alarming. Closed reports said more and more often that anomalous activity and the Corporation's technology touched the same deep layer, where memory, energy, space and personality stop being separate things. ES did not create anomalies directly, but it was moving too close to the boundary where reality begins to answer back.

This produced restrictions citizens never noticed. Some research was frozen without explanation. Certain modes of teleportation, energy and work with personality were developed more slowly than capabilities allowed. Promising programmes went into isolated reality sandboxes, and access to them was split up so finely that even senior specialists saw only a piece of the picture. The Corporation was building barriers against itself.

Hence the real meaning of Noah's Ark. In public, ES was building an almost final order. Quietly, it was preparing for the day that order could no longer be held together in full: distributed vaults, hidden bases, autonomous survival zones, pieces of knowledge scattered across the world.

The Corporation had two missions. The first was visible to all: to bring order and carry humanity into a new form of life. Few knew of the second: to learn how much the foundation could bear, and to prepare an emergency exit before it demanded its price.

The Golden Age of Enqelios Systems

In the Golden Age, ES finally stopped being one of the powers on Earth and became the foundation of civilization. The old states, markets and infrastructure either dissolved into its systems or survived as formalities.

For most people this was the fulfilment of the boldest utopias. For the first time, people could spend their strength on study, research, art and engineering rather than on survival. Mass stability, which history had known only in short flashes, became the norm. Differences in status remained, but life was no longer built on the fear of falling to the bottom.

Technology reached its peak. Fabricators of every class provided flexible production, supply points sustained infrastructure across enormous territories, and Null-Space Storage and transport removed almost all the inertia of logistics. Operators explored the edges of reality, while defensive systems, pylons, orbital nodes and exomaterials made the world obedient to calculation.

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The generations who grew up inside the system saw no miracle in this. They found it hard to believe that treatment had once depended on money, and that millions going hungry had been considered normal. To them ES was not one possible model of society among many but the only sensible one.

The leadership of those years was sure it stood on the right side of history. The world really had become safer, people really did live longer, and anomalies looked like rare deviations under control. It seemed the Corporation had closed the most destructive chapter of human history.

And it was a true golden age. Propaganda and terror had nothing to do with it: billions of people objectively lived better and longer than ever before. That is exactly why what came after is so hard to tell.

At the peak, the subtler consequences of success began to show. The line between society and the system was erased. The order felt natural, and fewer and fewer people asked what held it up. Only a handful could see the hidden strains deep in the architecture.

The mood of the era looked forward. Inside ES the idea was taking hold that humanity had outgrown its childish, destructive stage and could prepare for a careful move into space and for work with the multiverse. The world felt ready for the next step.

A catastrophe is tragic when there is something for it to destroy. Here there was.

Signs of a Hidden Crisis

The first signs of the crisis looked like neither a catastrophe nor a revolt. The symptoms were too small and too scattered, and the grandeur of the order that had been built hid them well.

The anomalies changed first. Some zones did not fully die down after their core was extracted and kept a residual activity. Others formed faster than forecast or behaved too coherently, as if space were slipping into distorted modes ever more readily. Researchers put it down to rare, acceptable deviations. But the boundary between the normal world and the anomalies had grown softer than in earlier centuries.

Then came the technical trifles. Rare failures of teleportation windows, strange delays in recovery on the pylons, instability in individual Null-Space Storage units, nodes that more and more often had to be retuned by hand, fluctuations in zones with a high density of SOULs. Taken separately, nothing serious. Taken together, it meant the system no longer had its old margin of reliability.

What frightened specialists most were shifts in the core itself and in the architecture of the SOUL. For centuries this level had been considered unchanging. Now certain processes needed ever more complex correction, the link between memory, recovery and energy grew less predictable, and a personality sometimes reassembled at the wrong pace or in the wrong form. There were only a handful of such cases, and they could not be discussed openly. At the time, no one thought to connect them with the ancient catastrophe of the Elios.

Restrictions appeared that the population never noticed. Research was slowed down or moved into closed departments. Requirements for energy, fabricators, deep personality correction and complex teleportation routes grew stricter. Society saw a

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disciplined, confident corporation. Inside, it was no longer resources it had to ration but the right to tamper with its own foundation.

The tone of strategy changed too. Instead of confidence in endless growth, restrained alarm was heard more and more often at the top. Noah's Ark, the reserve archives and the autonomous vaults stopped being far-sighted precautions and became a necessity.

There was no agreement in the assessments. Some believed the system was simply paying the price of maturity and needed finer tuning. Others were sure it was a fundamental limit that ordinary means could not remove. Still others feared panic above all: if society learned how shaky the foundation was, trust would collapse before the escape routes were ready. How do you preserve a world built on faith in stability, when the very knowledge of instability is dangerous?

Citizens noticed nothing. The crisis was unfolding inside a working system, not among ruins, and that was what made it so dangerous.

Gradually the scattered observations came together into an unofficial conclusion: the problem was not individual failures and anomalies but a foundation entering a phase that no model was ready for. Its scale and timing remained unknown. For the first time in centuries, the Corporation looked at the future from something other than a position of strength.

The Catastrophe of 5182

The Catastrophe of 5182 was the great turning point in the history of the Corporation and of humanity. By then ES had long been the very medium of life: everything passed through it. Only the foundation could fall.

By the start of the sixth millennium, the closed departments had lived with a hidden tension for many centuries. They understood that the problem was not individual failures but the ancient core of the last Elios, on which the entire architecture stood. According to the hypothesis most widely held in closed circles, the cause was the echo of the Elios's interdimensional bomb. The shockwave that had once wiped out their collective had not vanished. For billions of years it had spread through the layers of the multiverse, brushing against consciousness and its traces. When it reached the traces of the Elios's consciousness in the core, it began to destroy the very basis of the system.

By then the Corporation had already done a great deal to loosen its dependence on the centre: archives, autonomous supply points, energy buffers, reserve recovery complexes, hidden survival zones. All of it was enough to soften the blow, but not to prevent it. The degradation was happening at the level of the very principle that held the SOUL, memory and space together, and that principle could not be switched off without immediate collapse.

When the scale of the threat became clear, ES launched a final set of measures. Its full design is still unknown. According to reconstructions, the Corporation redistributed the load, shut down the most dangerous nodes, restricted teleportation and recovery, switched critical regions to autonomous mode, mothballed its data arrays and activated the reserves of Noah's Ark. Everything suggests it acted coldly and rationally to the very end.

The limit came sooner than even the grimmest models had predicted. In 5182 the central systems lost coherence. The information and energy cores stopped holding the world together. There was no explosion; everything came apart at once on many levels: memory tore away from recovery, nodes from the centre, anomalies from the systems

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that contained them. The core was present in all the middle worlds, so the blow fell on all of them at once.

The SOULs were hit hardest of all. In some regions the pylons fell silent within the first hours. In others they ran overloaded and could not save everyone. Anomalies that had been held back for centuries began to grow, merge and swallow territory, and new ones opened where it had once been safe.

How many people died is still argued over, partly because it is unclear whom to count as lost for good. In what was, by historical standards, a short time, the Corporation lost most of the world. The megacities emptied, transport and production fell apart, unified logistics ceased to exist. Humanity survived only because ES had prepared in advance for partial collapse: the autonomous nodes, hidden bases, vaults and reserve systems that had seemed like excessive caution in the Golden Age turned out to be the only things left standing.

The world broke apart into regions in varying states of preservation. In some places the remnants of infrastructure still kept order and a decent standard of living. In others, power passed to surviving operators, technocrats, keepers, individual directorates or isolated nodes. And in some places nothing remained but ruins, anomalies, communities, gangs and cults, for whom the legacy of ES had become little more than a myth.

Their descendants never agreed on what the Corporation had been. Some believe no system has the right to embed itself so deeply in a human being. Others point out that for centuries it held the world back from the worst, and at the decisive moment saved enough for people to still have a future.

A few generations later, children in the ruins will play at being operators, never knowing what the word once meant.

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